

VZCZCXRO1556
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #2883/01 3001830
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271830Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5248
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002883

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/27/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KJUS](#) [ECON](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BATTERED AND BRUISED BUT CARRYING ON: BAGHDAD IN
THE WAKE OF THE 10/25 BOMBINGS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2877
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2814

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher R. Hill for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Two car bombs detonated in close succession in Baghdad on October 25, heavily damaging the Ministry of Justice and the Baghdad Provincial Council building. As of October 27, the Ministry of Interior told MNF-I that 93 Iraqis were killed and 641 injured in the explosions, while the local and international media report over 160 fatalities. Five State Department contractors were also injured. The GOI and Baghdad municipal leaders, to say nothing of the general population, have been shaken by this latest attack, but the broad sense seems to be that, however horrific, these attacks have not disrupted governance.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT CONTINUED: PM Maliki and key security officials have, for now, taken a measured approach, a stance that appears to reflect lessons learned from criticism of the GOI's response to the August 19 bombings that damaged the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance. However, with national elections only months away, the political atmosphere is charged and various parties will be tempted to exploit political vulnerabilities they perceive are exposed by this high-profile attack. Embassy and MNF-I will continue to advise the GOI to focus on a thorough investigation, and refrain from playing blame games for domestic political advantage. Post has formed an interagency working group to coordinate assistance to the GOI ministries and agencies impacted by the October 25 bombing (ref A). END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

CITY SERVICES DISRUPTED BUT NOT CRIPPLED

[1](#)3. (C) Two car bombs exploded near the building housing the Baghdad Provincial Council (PC) and Governorate on October 25. Several hours after the explosion, C staff characterized the damage to PRT Baghdad officers as "huge," noting that it knocked out power to the entire building.

While no elected members of the PC were killed, many of their security personnel were, as they congregated near the front entrance of the building. (NOTE: An RSO advance team and two locally engaged staff were in the building; two RSO staff were injured and the LES were trapped in the building for a short time. END NOTE.)

[1](#)4. (C) The immediate impact of the bombing on local government and service provision is unclear, but the long-term impact is estimated now to be limited. As a legislative body, the PC can reconstitute itself in any meeting space with basic office equipment and

has already started to meet. The Baghdad governorate is an executive agency with responsibility for service provision in the rural districts around the core of Baghdad city, but the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works (MMPW) manages many public projects for it. As of October 27, there was little information about damage to the MMPW, located across the street from the MOJ. The greater the damage to the MMPW, the greater the impact on rural essential services. That said, while we anticipate a slowdown on local government service delivery, this was not a catastrophic blow, as would have occurred if the attack had targeted the Municipal Administration (Amanat) headquarters, which owns and manages most of the urban core's critical infrastructure.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

¶5. (C) The building housing the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Q5. (C) The building housing the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and Higher Judicial Council (HJC) was heavily damaged but the core work of those institutions will continue with little disruption. The two largest functions of the MOJ, administration of the corrections system and maintenance of the real estate register, are largely decentralized in district offices and facilities scattered across Iraq. While the HJC is the administrative arm of the Iraqi court system, no actual courts were damaged in this attack (septel).

GETTING BACK TO WORK: MFA AND MOF

BAGHDAD 00002883 002 OF 002

¶6. (C) Despite the extensive damage they suffered on August 19, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and Finance (MOF) are functioning. While most MFA staff have to work in two rotating shifts to share the office space that wasn't damaged, about half of the ministry has been renovated (ref B). While the MOF sustained major structural damage, ministry operations carried on with minimal impact by moving employees into other buildings or into undamaged offices. Despite the improvised work conditions, the Budget Directorate resumed its work on the 2010 budget almost immediately and the MOF submitted its draft budget to the cabinet with only a slight delay. Many other key directorates, like the Tax and Customs department, were not located in the main building and were not affected by the August 19 attack. However, some MOF employees tell emboffs that they have reservations about security in the neighborhood of the ministry.

COMMENT: KEEPING CALM AND CARRYING ON

¶7. (C) The PM's visceral reaction to the August 19 bombings, blaming Syria for facilitating the attacks, did not help the investigation and exposed deep fault lines within his cabinet. In marked contrast, Maliki focused his energy this time on comforting Baghdad residents with a message of solidarity, and rallied to the side of the Baghdad governor and PC employees to tour the damaged sites. The security services allowed U.S. investigators immediate access to the bombing scenes and have been receptive to USG technical support. While the Baghdad PC called for the dismissal of Interior Minister Bolani on October 27, we have seen no indication that the Iraqi parliament is seriously considering a withdrawal of confidence in Bolani or other senior security officers, as it wrestles with finalizing the election law. That said, with national elections only months away, the political atmosphere is charged and there will be temptation on various parties to exploit this high-profile attack. We will continue to counsel the PM and his team

to focus on the investigation at hand and refrain from lashing out at hypothetical enemies lurking within or across Iraq's borders.

HILL